

PACE enhanced my development as a community leader, and I know from speaking to my classmates that they all feel the same. From the very beginning, the PACE staff were encouraging and supportive as mentors and resources. Each classroom session covered relevant and engaging topics, presented by an expert panel of facilitators. Of course, by bringing emerging community leaders together, these classes provided us with the opportunity to learn from each other as well. As a result, the program advanced community building not only within our own neighborhoods but also across our city.

During the program, we were able to apply lessons from the classroom to real community projects. Working in teams, we formulated a project proposal and applied for funding through a Small Sparks award from the Neighborhood Matching Fund program. Incorporating this practical element into the curriculum deepened the value of PACE—and not only for us students: with eight groups each managing a project in a different area of the city, thousands of Seattle residents benefited from these projects as well.

The knowledge, skills, and connections that I gained through PACE have encouraged me to continue to lead and assist projects in my community and, in fact, have already had an effect on my community involvement. Drawing from my experience applying for the Small Sparks grant, I worked on a team to write a proposal for a larger Small and Simple NMF award, which my group recently was notified that we had been awarded. After hearing the news, one of my PACE classmates contacted me to ask for advice and resources to help her to implement a similar project. Additionally, a PACE project teammate and I have been nominated to hold executive positions on our District Council for 2013, and I look forward to continuing the collaborative relationship and friendship that we have developed. In these ways and others, the PACE program has continued to be valuable to me and to support my efforts as an emerging leader.